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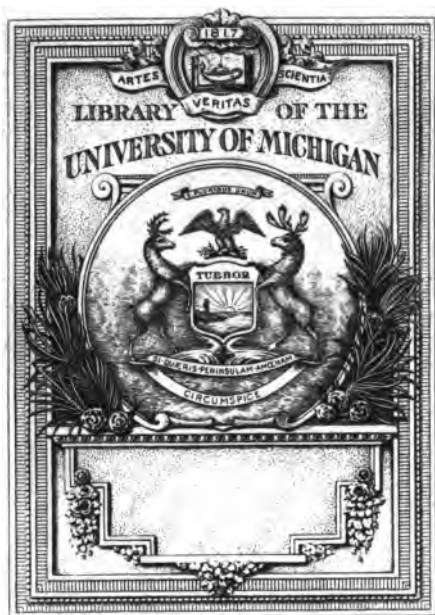
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AN  
INQUIRY  
INTO  
THE PRINCIPLE AND TENDENCY  
OF  
THE BILL  
NOW PENDING IN PARLIAMENT,  
FOR IMPOSING  
CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS  
ON  
*Cotton Factories.*

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ON  
THE BILL  
FOR  
IMPOSING RESTRICTIONS  
ON  
COTTON FACTORIES.

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**BEFORE** proceeding to consider the particular provisions of the bill, it is proper to advert to some misrepresentations which, if believed, will be extremely favourable to its success, and, in many instances, may be believed from the very frequency and confidence with which they have been reiterated.

The bill conciliates favour by professing to rescue a great portion of the rising generation from debility of body and depravity of mind. Not satisfied with this, however, its Mover has thought proper to represent this debility and depravity as springing from the forlorn and unprotected situation of the victims on whom they prey; and has thrown into his picture of the deserted state of the objects of his care many striking features which have no place in the original. It would be easy to prove this from his own speeches, and the speeches of the other friends of the bill in parliament; but a more authentic proof is supplied by a paper given in by Sir R. Peel to the Committee, inserted in the minutes

of evidence,\* and therefore justly considered as a genuine exposition of that gentleman's sentiments concerning the situation of the young persons employed in cotton factories. He there says, "I most anxiously press upon the Committee, that unless some parliamentary interference takes place, the benefits of the Apprentice Bill will soon be entirely lost, the practice of employing parish apprentices will cease, their places will be wholly supplied by other children, between whom and their masters no permanent contract is likely to exist, *and for whose good treatment there will not be the slightest security.* If parish apprentices were formerly deemed worthy of the care of parliament, I trust you will not withhold *from the unprotected children of the present day* an equal measure of mercy, as they have no masters *who are obliged to support them in sickness, or during unfavourable periods of trade.*" Here the young persons for whose protection the bill is framed are, through some strange mistake, represented to be exposed, forlorn and unprotected, to any excess of labour which the avarice of their employer may exact, and to all the hardships which his inhumanity may inflict. Why bewail the forlorn state of those who have never felt their paternal home? What is meant by talking of children being exposed to hardships without protection, who are constantly under the eye of their natural guardians, many of them even during the time when they are engaged in labour? How is there "not the slightest security for their good treatment," when their own parents have the unceasing superintendence of them, and thus can either prevent injury, or instantly remove them beyond the reach of its influence? What though they have no masters "obliged to maintain them in sickness, or during unfavourable periods of trade," when they have the cares of their own families to cherish

them in the one, and support them in the other? These children are neither deserted nor unprotected, nor exposed to the tyranny and injustice of a master; much less so, indeed, than the children of persons employed in many of the manufactories to which the bill does not extend. It is surprising that the imagination of a man of experience like Sir R. Peel should be haunted with such a group of imaginary evils; it is still more surprising that, believing in the existence of certain evils, and attempting to relieve them, he should propose a measure which has not even an apparent tendency to counteract the alleged mischiefs. Three circumstances are pathetically bewailed in the condition of the young people whom parliament is required to protect against their parents and their employers—that between them and their masters no permanent contract is likely to exist;—that the masters are not obliged to support them in sickness;—that they are not obliged to support them during unfavourable periods of trade. Grant for a moment that these are evils; grant further that they are evils which parliament could and should cure; to diminish the number of the hours of labour is no remedy. Such a diminution is not a permanent contract; it is not support in sickness; it is not employment during periods of bad trade.

Another misconception consists in considering the bill as derived from a principle already recognized, and acted on by parliament; and in identifying it with the 42d of the King, or the Apprentices Act, as it is commonly called. They are, to be sure, children of the same parent, and have to a certain degree a family likeness; but they are very different in their dispositions, and threaten to grow up into very opposite characters. The principle of that act was liable to little objection, compared with the present measure, because those whom it protected had literally and really no protector except the public; they had been the inmates of a parish

workhouse, and the public, whose charity had supported them, and had now procured for them an employment by which they could support themselves, was right in extending its care to their situation while engaged in this employment. But those comprehended under the present bill have nothing in common with the former: they have never been dependant on the public either for support or protection; they have not been put out to labour by the public; they are living in the family, and under the control of their parents, or other natural guardians. The young persons protected by the Apprentice Bill were bound to serve their master for a certain number of years; and, if ill-treated, though the law entitled them to redress, yet it was a redress which from the circumstances of their situation they could seldom claim with effect. But the children protected by the present bill are not engaged for any fixed period; if their employer wishes them to continue in his service, he must treat them with, at least, common kindness; and if cruelty is exercised, it must either be in the very presence, or in such circumstances that it must immediately come to the knowledge, of their parents who have the power, and, from interest as well as from affection, must have the inclination, to take care that their health is not injured, and their capacity for future labour diminished. The former act regarded only apprentices; this one (as will be shown immediately) extends to every person employed in a cotton factory: the former did not interfere with free labour; this one does: the former did not separate the father from the child, and put an act of parliament in the place of parental control; this one does. Thus the two measures are as unlike each other, as two bills upon the same subject, and not contradictory, can be; and the points in which they differ happen to be those on which the opponents of the present measure build their strongest objections to it. Yet the preamble of the bill,

after referring to the 42d of the king, says, "whereas the said act has been found insufficient to answer the purposes thereby intended, it is expedient, &c." This is radically erroneous, and exhibits the new measure as built on a foundation totally different from that on which it really rests. That act has not been found insufficient to effect its purpose; if it has failed at all, the failure has been owing, not to any deficiencies in the provisions of the act, but to negligence in its execution. That statute was never meant to extend to any persons but parish apprentices; it was never intended to regulate free labourers, or the children of free labourers; why then say that it has been found insufficient for its purpose because it has not reached those whom it was not meant to reach? Why hold out the present bill as intended merely to supply omissions or defects in the Apprentice Act? The principle which is now struggling for admission is a new one, entirely distinct from that which parliament recognized in regulating parish apprentices. Be it a true principle, or a false one, be it good, or be it bad, it should at least spurn disguise, and announce itself for what it really is. Surely its friends must have some doubts of the intrinsic merits of their foster-child, since they introduce it, not in its own name, but in the name, and under the appearance, of an old acquaintance, to whom it is in no way related.

Another misconception arises from this, that the bill apparently limits the period of labour only in the case of those whose tender age is well suited, at first sight, to diminish the reluctance which every one must feel to adopt so violent a regulation. The truth, however, is, that it is a bill to limit the hours of labour of *all persons* employed in cotton factories, whatever may be their age. Every person acquainted with cotton spinning knows, that so soon as the younger persons employed cease working, the more advanced must cease likewise; their labour is so connected, that they must cease or go on together. When, therefore,

the bill declares that no person under the age of sixteen shall be employed in a cotton-mill longer than a certain number of hours, it enacts that no person whatever shall work longer than that period, unless all under that age are dismissed, and adults are employed to do the work of children. Thus the bill gains covertly what it does not aim at openly. This circumstance must be carefully kept in view throughout the whole inquiry; for some of the most formidable objections to the measure arise from it, and the silence of the bill upon it has given no small share of their plausibility to many of the considerations which are usually advanced in favour of the measure.

We now proceed to consider the merits of the bill itself.

It proposes to preserve the health, and improve the morals, of all persons below the age of sixteen, who are employed in cotton factories. In tracing its probable effects, it will be proper to consider these objects separately. On each of them two questions occur; is the case such as calls for, and admits of, legislative interference? and are the provisions of the bill calculated to gain the end it proposes to itself. Certain considerations may then be stated, which are of essential importance in forming a judgment on the whole merits of the measure, but are not connected with either of the objects to which it particularly relates.

I. HEALTH.—The friends of the bill will not of course deny, that with them lies the burden of proving that pestilential operation of cotton factories on the health of their inmates, on which the measure is founded. The proprietors of cotton factories cannot be required to show, that the employment is at least as healthy, as by far the greater number of those with which the bill does not interfere. They are entitled to hold that all the allegations made on this subject by the patrons of the measure are unfounded, till their truth has been established by proper evidence. But this is not all. The supporters of the bill have not done

enough, when they have proved, if they can do so, that the employment in question is in some measure prejudicial to the well-being of the bodily constitution, and that there are some employments more favourable to uniform and lasting health. Although all this were made out, it would afford no justification of so violent a revolution in the management of cotton factories. Parliament will never countenance the absurdity of pruning away the hours of labour in every employment where health is found inferior to what it would be in more favourable circumstances; for if it do so, there is scarcely a manufacture in the kingdom which it can consistently spare; and, at the same time, all its labours will be vain, because they will be directed to remove an inconvenience, which is inseparable from the frame and necessities of society. The miner is doomed, day after day, to inhale the most insalubrious of all atmospheres; the hand-weaver, from morning till night, toils in a low-roofed and damp workshop; the man who is employed in a chemical work is exposed to vapours infinitely more injurious to health than long confinement, or the temperature of a factory; even agricultural labourers, by being forced to encounter all the inclemencies of our changeable climate, often become the victims of rheumatism and its kindred maladies, not less painful than the diseases attendant upon a sedentary life, nor less powerful causes of premature old age. In these and in innumerable other cases, the labouring classes are surrounded with circumstances inseparable from their employment, which appear to be unfavourable to prolonged and uninterrupted health. When we turn our eyes to higher situations, no course of life can put the bodily constitution to a severer trial than the studious solitude in which the lawyer must spend one part of his life, and the crowded courts in which he must spend another: except perhaps the pestilential effluvia of the dissecting room, and the tainted atmosphere of hospitals and sick rooms, which



must be constantly inhaled by our physicians and surgeons. But what visionary ever dreamed of graduating a scale of the comparative salubrity of different trades and professions, and reducing them to an imaginary equality, by abridging the hours of labour in the proportion in which each was supposed to obstruct the full enjoyment of health? In most cases, this would amount to a proscription of the employment, because it would disable the artisan from supporting himself by his earnings; and in all cases, it would be inconsistent with the prosperity of a manufacturing and commercial country. It is not necessary, however, to pursue the argument on this subject, because what we contend for is virtually admitted by the friends of the bill themselves. For if they deny it, and maintain that parliament should abridge the hours of labour in every employment, the circumstances attending which are not altogether favourable to health; how will they justify the exemption of all manufacturers except the cotton, while it can be truly said of by far the greater part of them, that they are less favourable to health? The limitation of the bill to one manufacture proves, that its friends are not willing to maintain the propriety of parliamentary interference in all cases, where health is found to be affected by the nature or length of labour. The proof, therefore, which they are to adduce of the necessity of the present bill must be of a particular kind. It must not stop short at proving, that the spinners of cotton would be more healthy if employed in some other trade, or, during shorter hours at their own; for this, we have seen, amounts to nothing, in reference to the necessity of the bill. It must show, that there is among them a prevalence of disease, out of all proportion with the effects of manufactures in general: that cotton factories are the cradles of disease, peculiarly deadly in its nature, or extensive in its operation; in short, that they are exceptions from the general influence of manufacturing esta-

ishments; and that, therefore, while others are allowed to go on undisturbed, they must be restricted, and regulated, and depressed. This is what they are in justice bound to make out. They cannot escape by saying, as has been said, that the *great number* of persons employed by the cotton factories is a good reason for subjecting them to particular regulations. If all that can be alleged of these persons, however numerous, is, that they are not so healthy as they would be in some other situations, it is of no importance whether they are 300 or 3000; for the same thing may be said, with equal truth, of nearly as many millions. The *number* of persons engaged in these works may be a good reason against, but can be no good reason for, parliamentary interference; the necessity of *peculiar restrictions* must be established by proving *peculiar insalubrity*.

Having fixed the point to be made out, we are now prepared to proceed to the evidence on which it depends. The first thing to be remarked is, that if any such uncommon unhealthiness exists in cotton factories as will justify the imposition of particular restrictions, it has escaped the Committee of the House of Commons. A great body of evidence was taken by that Committee, bearing upon every part of the subject, and elucidated by numerous documents; but when it returned to the House an account of its labours, it did not report that any insalubrity of the kind in question had been proved to exist. If the Committee had really believed that the case of the friends of the bill had been made out by the evidence, they would have reported so to the House. They have not done so: it is to be presumed, therefore, that in the opinion of the Committee, there were no grounds for such a report.

The evidence itself must now be examined; and, first of all, the opinions of medical men, because they are not only important in themselves, but will likewise furnish us with principles that will be useful in estimating the evidence of facts.

The first professional evidence taken by the Committee was that of medical practitioners in London; and whatever they have stated is entitled to respectful attention, for among them are the first medical names in the kingdom. It is fortunate, therefore, for the opponents of the bill, that they can admit the fair amount of the evidence of these gentlemen, without giving up any objection, or the ground of any objection to the measure. For, in the first place, the evidence of these gentlemen goes no further than to prove, that in the cotton manufacture, as in most others, there are circumstances, the absence of which would, in some measure, be beneficial to health; but it does not, in any degree, establish that peculiar unhealthiness which alone can justify peculiar regulations. They state, and state justly, that long confinement is not so beneficial to health as a shorter period would be; that a high temperature is less salubrious than a moderate and regular one; and that children reared in the country would in general be more healthy than persons of the same age who are long confined in factories. These, and similar remarks, will be found to be the amount of their evidence, when it is fairly weighed; and we have already shown, that nothing of this kind can justify, in any point of view, the yoke which is preparing for the cotton manufacture.

But further, without derogating from the professional eminence of these gentlemen, we may say, what they have virtually said themselves, that their opinions must be received with considerable caution, because they are purely theoretical; drawn from general principles which they have had no opportunity of verifying or correcting by actual observation of the circumstances, to which in the present instance they are applied. Every man of even moderate information and experience knows, how frequently general reasoning turns out to be inapplicable, when brought to the test of particular cases; and it is not wonderful that theoretical views, even of men of great talents and learning, from which they attempt to decide *à priori* upon the state of

health of a great number of individuals, should not coincide with the reality; for having no practical knowledge of the situation of these individuals, they have not before them all the *data* on which an accurate judgment can be safely founded. He who has had the largest share of general experience, and employs most sagacity in applying it, will be least surprised that discrepancies of this kind should occur. Accordingly these gentlemen themselves are all anxious to state their want of experience upon those matters to which the investigation refers, and to make the Committee understand fully, that the opinions they give are not founded on any such experience, but are merely the result of general reasoning. Mr. Carlisle, for example, appears to see so clearly the various ways in which these results of general reasoning may not coincide with the reality, that when asked what number of hours a person may be employed in particular factories without detriment to his health, he candidly answers, "I apprehend that that question would more properly belong to a person who has especially attended such manufactories, and seen the marked consequences, which I have not." As another proof of the same thing, we may remark, that these gentlemen differ much among themselves, and still more so from other medical persons whose opinions have been formed from long observation in circumstances most favourable to such observation. Dr. Baillie is of opinion (p. 29), that for children under *ten* years of age, *six or seven* hours of labour, including meals, is as much as their constitution can bear; Dr. Pemberton (p. 34) is of opinion, that for children of that age, the period of daily labour should not exceed *nine* hours; Mr. Ashley Cooper (p. 33) and Sir Gilbert Blane think that ~~children~~ *between the ages of seven and ten cannot be employed more than ten* hours without injury; Mr. Wood thinks *twelve* hours a sufficient number. Again, all, or most of the medical gentlemen who speak from general reasonings, seem

to think that long employment in factories will stunt the growth: Mr. Wood, a medical gentleman, who speaks from practice and observation, gives his opinion the other way—"I wish," says he, "to speak practically: the children in my own district rather gain height than otherwise." (P. 192.)

What we have already stated is, we think, sufficient to establish two points: first, that the opinions of these medical gentlemen do not, in any way, decide the matter at issue in favour of the bill; secondly, that though they were much more favourable to the bill than they really are, they are from their very nature subject to drawbacks which, at least, neutralize it. But there is more medical testimony to be weighed—the testimony of respectable provincial practitioners whose opinion has been formed from long observation of all the facts which can affect the point in question, and long practice, among the very people to whose situation it relates. Mr. Buchanan (p. 52) gives an opinion of his own regarding the health of his work-people; but he gives likewise the opinion of the medical gentleman who attends them, which is, "that in the course of his practice, he finds less disease existing with the people employed in the works, than in the general population of the surrounding country." In the parish of Bingley, in Yorkshire, there are thirteen mills and manufactories; in which, according to the report of the vicar of the parish (p. 14), the majority of the population is employed; and, with regard to them, the medical gentlemen who practise among them certify (p. 15), "that the general state of health of the children and young persons employed in the factories is quite as good as that of others, of a similar age, who are employed in any other way." In the parish of Keighley, in the same county, there are twenty-nine mills and manufactories, employing the majority of the population; and the medical persons who practise among the people so employed, state, that

their health is not at all inferior to the health of those employed in any other way (p. 15). The report of Messrs. Botts' cotton works in Staffordshire contains the following statement (p. 85): "The health of the persons in this manufactory has been equally as good as those employed in farming purposes, and they have been equally free from infectious diseases." This statement is given *upon oath* by a medical practitioner who has attended the manufactory for eighteen years, and is confirmed by two of the justices for the county. Mr. Poulson, a respectable surgeon in a manufacturing district, who has practised for twenty-seven years among all classes of persons in that district, and in particular has attended the work-people of six cotton factories, which employ upwards of 1100 persons, certifies (p. 222): "that the children employed in the said several mills are well fed and clothed, clean and healthy, more so than the generality of the poor of any other description, or in any other employment in the neighbourhood." Mr. Wright, one of the surgeons to the General Hospital, near Nottingham, who, besides his usual practice, has attended the work-people in the cotton-mills at Papplewick, where 460 persons are employed, certifies (p. 222), "that the children in the said mills are fully as healthy if not more so, than those of the labouring poor, and appear cheerful and happy." Mr. Wright does not stand alone; he is supported by Dr. Pennington, of Nottingham, who says (p. 22), "After a careful review of the most important circumstances connected with the health of the parties, my conviction is, that the persons employed in the cotton spinning manufactories are as healthy and strong as any engaged in sedentary pursuits in general; more healthy and strong than the frame-work knitter; and much more so than the shoemaker and the tailor." These gentlemen are not singular in their opinions; for to all that has been already advanced, let us add the evidence of the Vice-chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, an active and intelligent magis-

trate; of the visitor and head master of the sunday school at Manchester, attended by 1850 children; and of the magistracy of the county of Lancaster. The first of these, Mr. Evans, who, in his capacity of regular acting magistrate at Manchester, has had no common opportunities of knowing the subject, and has no connexion with the cotton manufacture, and no interest either in opposing or promoting the bill, says (p. 312): "I think that the experience I have had as a magistrate, and the returns which are so made are sufficient to satisfy my mind, that there can be no complaint of any general insalubrity attending the occupation of children who are employed in cotton-mills: that there are merely the usual returns of epidemical, or other accidental causes of complaint, as they may exist elsewhere; and no complaint which I consider of a local nature is applicable to the town of Manchester in general, or to the persons employed in the cotton factories in particular; and I conceive, that from the weekly returns I receive, if there was any peculiar frequency of ill health, or inability to gain a livelihood by children so employed, the opportunities which I have in my weekly superintendence of the whole of Manchester would give me the means of knowing it." The visitor and head master of the large school in Manchester, referred to above, certify (p. 371): "that the factory children are more clean in their persons, and enjoy as good health, though they do not look so well as other children." The magistracy of the county of Lancaster, with one exception, have no connexion with the cotton manufacture (p. 313); but they are anxious for the welfare of the county to which they belong, and have therefore thought it their duty deliberately to pass a resolution (p. 285), at a general annual session, declaring that the bill in question, except as to the regulations to prevent working in the night, "will be inefficient and incapable of producing any salutary effect,"—thus making no exception in regard to health.

How, then, is this mass of testimony to be got rid of? None of the witnesses who gave it have any interest in misleading the Committee by false information; but the most important of them have their professional character involved in the accuracy of the judgment they have formed; they have not lived at a distance from the scene, and unconnected with the persons of whose situation they speak, but have been constantly among them, and compelled by their professions to notice their condition; they do not give their statements and opinions in a loose or underhand way, as if hoping that inaccuracies and falsities might be explained away by the vagueness of the expression, or would remain concealed by the obscurity of the occasion on which they were used; but they are expressed pointedly and distinctly, in one case confirmed upon oath; and, in all, publicly produced to a Committee of the House of Commons, and given with the intention of being brought under the notice of the British parliament. Here, surely, every source either of error or deceit is most satisfactorily excluded.

The evidence of *facts* still remains to be weighed. A comparison of the rates of sickness and death among those employed in cotton-mills and those engaged in other manufactures, must surely furnish good data for ascertaining the comparative salubrity of the employments. This kind of proof, however, has been objected to, on the ground, that the rate of death in cotton-mills is fallacious, because the persons employed in them are always changing. This is a rash objection. There might be something in it, if we were comparing the mortality in the population, so to speak, of a cotton-mill, with the mortality of a portion of the population which was less liable to change; but it is altogether unfounded, when the comparison is made between portions equally changeable, or where the difference, if any, is so slight, that it cannot lead to any material error in the calculation. Great changes are always taking place in



towns, and villages in the neighbourhood of towns, among hand-weavers, for instance, calico printers, common labourers, and many other trades which employ the greatest part of the working classes; what fallacy can there be in comparing the mortality among these with the mortality of cotton spinners? Who will venture to say that the population of a flax-mill, or wool-mill, or weaving factory, is more uniform than that of a cotton-mill? How, then, can a comparison of deaths and sickness among them lead to an erroneous conclusion?

A comparison of mortalities, therefore, is good *proof* in this case; and that comparison is decidedly hostile to the bill. Let us take some examples. At the Catrine works, in Ayrshire, the average of deaths for eight years (1808 to 1816, both inclusive) was one in 229 (p. 58). The mortality among the people employed at Messrs. Bolts' works, in Staffordshire, was one in 136; while in the rest of the parish it was one in 48 (p. 85.) At the Blantyre works there were only two deaths out of about 800 persons, while in nearly an equal number in the village who had never been employed in the mill, seven deaths occurred (p. 165).

This is the rate of health at cotton factories, compared with other factories which are equally changeable; and there can be no surer proof of the inconconsistent spirit of the bill. The mortality, for example, in flax, and wool, and weaving factories, which will not pretend to be less changeable than cotton-mills, is higher than that of the cotton manufacture. It is not difficult to account for this decided superiority of cotton-mills, in point of healthiness, over many of the other employments in which the labouring classes are engaged. Every one knows the importance of cleanliness and proper food to the preservation of health; and all the witnesses examined on the subject agree in representing the operatives in cotton factories as, in general, more comfortably situated in that respect than the majority

of other manufacturing labourers. By the regularity of their employment, they are in a great measure precluded from that frequent indulgence in pernicious practices, which so often affects the health of persons whose labour is less uniform, because more dependant on themselves. Neither are they so frequently exposed to those sudden fluctuations in the rate of their earnings, which injure health by the rapid change from a state of tolerable comfort to the extreme of deprivation. During the calamitous season of distress, which has not yet passed over, how superior has their situation been to that of other labourers? While the latter suffered under the most lamentable poverty, which at length necessarily produced disease, and spread the alarm of *contagion* through many manufacturing towns, neither the one nor the other was to be found among the inmates of the cotton factories.

The only species of evidence that now remains for consideration, is that which has been given, or rather attempted to be given, against cotton-mills, by witnesses who knew nothing either about them or medicine, and therefore were in no way qualified to give any trust-worthy opinion on the subject. Their evidence, indeed, is so vague and unsatisfactory; their most decided opinions are so explained away, in the course of examination, by subsequent qualifications; and the grounds of their belief turn out to be so plainly fallacious; that it would scarcely be worth while to consider how far their statements go in support of the proposed restrictions, were it not that the proprietors of cotton-mills do well to show, that they are willing to investigate every charge, and meet every witness who is brought against them. The general and decisive answer to all these gentlemen is, that they have judged only from appearance, from a hasty and injudicious mode of observation, without making any proper inquiry, or any inquiry at all, how far their rashly-formed conclusions were justified by fact. They all

have noticed, or supposed that they have noticed, a languid and sickly appearance marking the countenance and frame of persons who work in cotton factories: they have not, it seems, the glowing complexion and brawny limbs of a ploughman; and therefore it is inferred, that they are all hastening to the grave, and that cotton-mills give as much employment to the doctor and the sexton as to the poor. This may be very good philanthropy, but it is very bad logic; for the absence of red cheeks and clear complexions, of bright eyes and broad shoulders, is perfectly consistent with the full enjoyment of health; and it is by no means essential to the prosperity of the country that the spinning jennies in a cotton-mill should be attended by Belvidere Apollos, or that the picking-rooms should exhibit an assemblage of Medicean Venuses. Who does not know that the artisans, who form the greatest part of a town population, never present the ruddy complexion or robust frame of the peasantry? but who ever thought of inferring that the majority of a town population is, therefore, unhealthy, and unhealthy from their occupations: for want of health arising from other causes—from the extremes of poverty, for instance, and the indulgence in pernicious habits which are found in a town, has no relation to the question.

Besides stating, therefore, that the work-people appeared to them to be unhealthy, these gentlemen should have enabled themselves to state two things more: did this appearance proceed from the employment? and was it in reality the effect of bad health? Yet these last topics, on which all the value of their evidence depends, were not once made the subject of any personal inquiry. Thus Mr. Nathaniel Gould says, that children attending schools from factories appeared to him to be unhealthy; but, on being asked if he took any means to learn whether they were sick in reality, he answers, that he did not; and yet

the state of health among these children was not merely an unheeded observation fleeting through his mind on an occasional inspection; it was a point to which he was paying a great deal of attention, and which attracted his notice in schools where he was constantly visiting. It would not only have been more satisfactory, but was absolutely necessary to make his evidence of any use, that he should have ascertained, whether sickness originating in the nature of their employment really existed; and whether the *appearance* by which he allowed himself to be deceived arose from other circumstances, or did really affect the general welfare of the body.

But we have not done with the method which Mr. George Gould, Mr. Nathaniel Gould, and Mr. Whitelegg, adopted to ascertain the insalubrity of cotton factories. These gentlemen visited sunday schools in Manchester, selected the children who "*appeared*" to them "*to look unhealthy*," asked them if they worked in factories, and marked the numbers who answered in the affirmative, and of those who replied in the negative; taking no step, as has been already noticed, to ascertain whether there really was sickness upon any of them. Now when, in the execution of this novel contrivance for striking the average of health, they were inquiring what proportion of the *sickly looking* belonged to factories, they ought to have inquired likewise what proportion of the *apparently healthy* was employed in these works, or what proportion the scholars so employed bore to the whole number of scholars. Suppose a school to consist of 200 boys, 160 of whom are engaged in cotton spinning, and the remaining 40 in trades, neither more nor less hurtful to the bodily frame, is it not clear that if the unhealthy looking be selected, four fifths of them will be found, in all probability, to belong to factories; not because the factories are insalubrious (for by the supposition, all the boys follow occupations equal in this respect),

but because they furnish four fifths of the whole number of scholars. Further, if the proportions resulting from the method adopted by these gentlemen are received as good evidence, that employment in cotton-mills is injurious to the *appearance* of health, it proves equally that other employments, or, for aught these gentlemen know, the want of all employment, produces the same sickly appearance; and consequently other trades, and idleness itself, must be subjected to the proposed regulations. But the specification of the schools visited by these gentlemen, which is given in Mr. Whitelegg's evidence (p. 158—160), shows the true light in which statements of this kind are to be viewed, for it contains many instances in which the proportions are all in favour of the factories.

Schools.	Sickly looking.	Sickly looking employed in factories.	Ditto not employed in factories.
St. James's .....	8 .....	4 .....	4
St. Anne's .....	5 .....	2 .....	3
Workhouse .....	5 .....	2 .....	3
Trinity School ....	18 .....	5 .....	13
Tib Street .....	65 .....	34 .....	31
Hanover Street ....	42 .....	10 .....	32
Gravel Lane .....	53 .....	21 .....	32
Oxford Road ....	14 .....	6 .....	8

It is true, that the statement contains many instances where the proportions lean decidedly the other way; but all this only proves the very point we wish to establish—that this sickly appearance, even if we should run into the absurdity of ascribing it to an actual want of health, while it has not been verified in any one instance, is not fixed, in any particular manner, upon cotton-mills. It turns out to be prevalent in other situations, as well as in them. In some cases it is more observable in them than in

other employments, and in some it is more prevalent in other employments than in them.

The same general remarks might be applied to the evidence of other gentlemen, whose opinions are just as vague, and rest upon just as fallacious views, as those we have noticed. We shall not enter into a tedious detail of all the instances which prove this ; but we shall give other two examples, to satisfy every person that our assertions are not made at random.

Mr. Worsley, a hat-manufacturer, states (p. 111, 112), that children employed in factories “ look poor, little, emaciated things, many of them.” Many of them ! whence this saving clause ? If the appearance proceeds from the nature of the labour, or the length of the confinement, how does it not extend to all ? Nay, Mr. Worsley himself adds, that he cannot say the *majority* of children employed in factories have this emaciated appearance—a clear proof that this appearance does not necessarily proceed from the employment, and certainly no proof that it arises from actual sickness. But when people are resolved to give hasty opinions, formed from superficial observation, of a matter with which they have no practical acquaintance, they must lay their account with being wrong. Thus Mr. Worsley says, that he thinks the employment of children in cotton-mills is more laborious than the work of those who make hats. One would suppose that, before giving this opinion, Mr. Worsley took care to learn what the labour of the former is ;—but no :—for when pointedly asked if he knows what the labour of children in cotton-mills is, he answers, “ *I do not of course.*” Then the opinion he gave would, “ of course,” have been better omitted.

Mr. Price, a worthy magistrate of the county of Warwick (p. 121, et seq.), has had no experience in, but has a very laudable horror against, cotton factories. He never was in more than one cotton-mill in his life, and he thinks

"that the children looked hectic." But did he take any steps to ascertain whether want of health was really prevalent? Not one. On the contrary, when very properly asked by the Committee, why, as he entertained so bad an opinion of the influence of cotton-mills on *health*, in a single visit, he did not think it his duty as a magistrate to make further inquiries, he defends himself by saying, "that he had never stated that any injury was done to the *health* of the children; that their *appearance* was what he had stated, but he had said nothing as to the *injury of their health*, and that he can say nothing as to whether their health was really injured or not." He afterwards says, "the house was very clean, their beds very clean and comfortable: *all* that struck and afflicted me was, their want of recreation, their *solitude*, and unvarying scenes." What is meant by *solitude* in a cotton-mill we do not pretend to understand; and as to the other constituent parts of the calamities of cotton spinners, it is too much to say that a staple manufacture must be depressed, because the persons engaged in it are abridged in "recreation," and doomed to "unvarying scenes." We know nothing but the prospect of the millennium, that can lighten Mr. Price's grief on these accounts.

No rational man can for a moment oppose testimony like this (in some instances nullified by posterior explanations of the parties themselves, in others deprived of all force by the vagueness of the data on which the inferences are founded) to the distinct opinions of men who from their profession are able to judge, whose life has been spent in a great measure among the persons to whom the inquiry refers, and whose attention has necessarily been drawn to the very points on which information is desired; and still less can it be opposed to the decisive facts in favour of employment in cotton-mills, which have been adduced from the evidence. We have said nothing of the evidence given by

the proprietors of these works themselves, because we were aware of the captious objections which might be taken to it. These objections indeed, would justly have carried little weight, because the persons examined were gentlemen of character and station, whose word was as good as their oath; but we wished this part of the argument to be exposed to no objection, regarding the competence of the witnesses. We are now, however, entitled to take the evidence of these gentlemen into the account; because we have now shown that, if favourable to the cotton factories, it agrees with, and is confirmed by, the opinions of most competent witnesses and facts ascertained beyond all doubt. When, therefore, the proprietors who were examined state that they have never observed any detrimental effect on the work-people's health from the nature or period of their labour; that they are as healthy, and, in some cases, appear to be more so than persons employed in other works; their statements are entitled to at least equal regard with the opinions of men who have no practical acquaintance with factories, and whose judgments have been confessedly built on a loose and narrow foundation.

From all this, we arrive at the conclusion that no case has been made out to justify parliamentary interference. When the supporters of the bill call for so strange a measure as a limitation upon free labour and the productive industry of the country, it was incumbent on them to prove distinctly, by unexceptionable evidence, that the peculiarly pestilential influence of cotton factories on the health of their inmates, by which they pretended to justify the measure, really had an existence. They have utterly failed to do this; all the valid and conclusive evidence goes the other way. This, indeed, was to be expected; for it was hazardous in the extreme to charge a great proportion of the manufacturing labourers with such a want, not merely of natural affection, but of common humanity, as



was involved in the supposition, that they voluntarily sacrificed the bodily and mental welfare of their children; to supply funds for their own debaucheries. This charge, however, though not expressly, is virtually made by the bill; for it proceeds on the supposition that cotton factories, as they are at present managed, are equal fatal to health and morals; while no man has denied, and the whole body of evidence proves, that young children are received, not to promote any interest of their employer, but solely to gratify the anxious wishes of their parents. The Committee thought it worth while to put a few questions as to this implied want of affection; and the similarity of the answers soon rendered it unnecessary to continue the questions. Dr. Pemberton did not think (p. 35), "that people in the labouring classes would be willing to injure their children by employing them in more constant labour than they were competent to." Sir Gilbert Blane (p. 46) is "clearly of opinion, that these parents would spurn at the idea of sacrificing their children to unhealthy employment." Even Mr. Owen concedes (p. 38), (and he is no enemy of the bill) that "though some might be inclined to over-work their children, the great number would not do so." The accuracy of these opinions cannot be doubted; and combined with the acknowledged anxiety of the parents to have their children employed, they form an important addition to the mass of evidence, which proves that the supporters of the bill, instead of making out the destructive influence of cotton factories upon health, have led to an investigation, which has shown their ideas to be unfounded; and, if they really feel that benevolence with which they profess to be animated, they will be the first to rejoice at the detection of their error.

2. The second point of inquiry is, whether, supposing the influence of factories on the health of those employed in them to be as injurious as it is alleged to be, the provi-

sions of the bill are well suited to gain the end which it professes to have in view. The regulations by which it proposes to secure health are two, viz. the fixing of a minimum age, below which no child shall be received into a cotton factory at all; and enacting, that all persons, *of whatever age*, employed in such a factory, shall work for a certain number of hours, shorter than the period during which they are at present employed in cotton-mills. With regard to the first of these regulations, it is an object of no importance to the proprietors, whether they are confined to children who have reached the age of nine, or are a to receive them at all ages; for they have no interest in employing children below the age fixed in the bill. It is, however, a matter of no small moment to the children themselves, and to their parents, at whose request alone they are ever employed.

Even here the bill will not gain its end. The age of the child is to be ascertained by the register of baptism, "or other satisfactory evidence;" and to decide whether this "other" evidence is satisfactory, must of course be left to the master; in every case of a child being offered to his factory, he must do his best to satisfy himself that the child is nine years old. Now there is an infinite variety of ways, in which fraud may be successfully practised by those who are anxious that their children should be employed, and which the master cannot possibly detect. Wherever people are prohibited by statute from doing what they have a strong desire to do (as in the present case), and the statute at the same time by the inaccuracy and vagueness of its directions leaves a number of loop-holes, through which, by the help of a little ingenuity, those who are interested in escaping from the regulations can easily contrive to escape—in such a case, the statute has uniformly been found to fail, and has encouraged fraud, without in any respect gaining its end. This is one way in which the bill is insufficient to do what it proposes,

Again, the bill will fail in gaining its end, because what it prohibits the parents to do in one way, it does not hinder them from doing in another. When parents, who are anxious that their children should be employed, find the cotton manufactory shut against them, they will necessarily seek after other modes of deriving profit from the quantity of labour which they can exert. They will find other employments for them, in which the labour is either as long, or its shorter duration is counterbalanced in this respect by greater severity. In these other employments their health will be exposed to much greater risk of injury, than in a cotton-mill. There, they are generally employed by, and work under the eye of, their own parents or relations; but, when sent to other employments, they will be much more directly subject to the commands of a new master, and further removed from the exercise of parental control. Every one knows, that employments can be found for these children, in which much longer confinement and labour will be required of them. Many kinds of hand-weavers, for instance, employ very young children, who must work as long as their masters; and, at present, actually do work fifteen or sixteen hours a day. The friends of the bill cannot be allowed to say, that natural affection will prevent this effect of the measure; for their doctrine is, that neither affection nor reason is strong enough to defend the child from the ill-judging avarice of those who gave him being. The doctrine, we admit, is too shocking to be believed; but it must not be adopted and rejected by turns. The bill cannot render parental love either stronger in its operation or more clear-sighted in its plans. If then the father ought not to be the arbiter of the time when his child shall follow one particular employment, he ought not to have the disposal of his destination in other respects. There is an indecency in requiring parliament to declare, we *will not* trust parents with the power of sending their offspring to cotton factories, but we *will* trust them with the power of

sending them to other employments equally prejudicial to health, or even more so. In so far then, as the bill proposes to preserve health by fixing a minimum age, it appears to be entirely futile, or even in degree to aggravate, instead of diminish the alleged evil.

This part of the question, however, is of no very great direct importance. The proposed limitation of age is objectionable, chiefly on the ground, that it brands cotton factories, exclusively of other manufacturing establishments, with an unmerited reproach ; that it recognizes a principle which may and will afterwards be carried most dangerous lengths ; and that it establishes a precedent, which will be employed to justify every future restriction that the wildness of dreaming reformers and innovators may hereafter choose to patronise.

But the second regulation, the limitation of the hours of labour, is of a much more serious character, and is pregnant with the most important consequences to all parties. It limits the hours of labour to *every person* employed in the factories, takes from him the power of disposing of his own honest exertions to gain a livelihood, and denies him the privilege of regulating his industry by his own wishes or necessities. We say *of every person* ; for it must never be out of mind, that a restriction on those under the age of sixteen is, in effect, an indirect, but effectual restriction of all the adults, because, from the nature of their employment, the two classes must work or stop together. The question then is, Will this regulation tend to preserve the health of the people employed in the factories ?

The obvious effect of this regulation will be, a diminution in the earnings of the persons employed. This diminution will be produced in several ways. A portion of their own earnings will be lost by the shorter time during which they work ; if they have children in the factory, a portion

of their earnings will be cut off in a similar way; another portion will disappear by the bill preventing them from making up time which has been lost by stoppages; and the diminution produced in all these ways will perhaps be further increased by a positive fall in the rate of wages, in consequence of the proprietor's sunk capital being rendered less productive. The employer who pays a man a certain sum for working twelve and a half hours, will not pay him as much for working eleven; and the operative who is a piece-worker, as it is called, that is, whose earnings depend on the quantity he produces, will not produce the same quantity in eleven hours, which he would do in twelve and a half. No defence of the evidence of the proprietors of cotton-mills is required here; for their testimony is too successfully identified with the dictates of common sense, to render an attack upon it dangerous to any one but the person who is foolish enough to make it. "If the hours of labour should be diminished," says one of these gentlemen (p. 8), "the spinners could not afford, in the present state of the market, the same wages which they pay at present; for they would not only be obliged to reduce the wages in proportion to the time lost, but we should have to reduce further, to make up for the deficiency of produce from our machinery, which affects our sunk capital." Another of them says (p. 167), "The work-people would not only lose their wages for the time that they lost, but we would be obliged to reduce the rate of wages, because the article would cost us higher in proportion to the quantity of work that we lost by the reduction of the time."

The only doubt which any one has attempted to throw over these very plain truths, arises from certain speculations about moral principles in which Mr. Owen indulged before the Committee. As these speculations, though possibly very beautiful, happen, like many other beautiful speculations, not to be over-intelligible, we shall not waste much

time upon them. That gentleman is of opinion, that the greater exertions and more regular industry of the work-people, arising from an amiable wish to show their gratitude to their employers for shortening their hours, would enable them ultimately to produce nearly as great a quantity as if the present period of daily labour were continued.—“From the greater desire of the individuals,” says he (pp. 93, 94), “to do their duty conscientiously, from the great wish to make up for any supposed or probable loss that the proprietor might sustain in consequence of giving this amelioration to the people, such conduct to work-people is the most likely method to make them conscientious.” Do not the friends of the measure who argue in this way see, that, if they believe their own argument, they must give up their own bill; for all these good effects will necessarily cease, when the curtailment of the labourer’s time, instead of being bestowed as a kindness by a humane and attentive employer, is forcibly wrested from him by an act of parliament. The work-people can no longer feel any desire to compensate for a “supposed loss” to the proprietor, because that loss has not been sustained in consequence of any measure he has voluntarily taken to ameliorate their condition;—the foundation of their gratitude is gone; Parliament tells them that a diminution of their labour is not an indulgence which they should crave, but a right which they are entitled to demand, and which the legislature is resolved to make effectual. Besides, although these feelings were to exist, they would unfortunately be incapable of doing any good. Principles of gratitude, and the principles of mechanics, are here at variance; the emotions of these swelling bosoms must be content to keep pace with the motions of the spinning machines. The quantity produced depends on mechanical motions, which cannot be quickened to the wish of the workmen.

To attempt to fix the amount to which the earnings of the

workmen will be diminished, is unnecessary, and would be presumptuous. Ultimately, it must be at least proportional to the diminution of their hours of labour. We say ultimately, because the immediate effect of the bill will be, by limiting the time during which the operatives may work, to cut off a portion of the labour which is now in the market, and, consequently, to raise the value of the remainder. In eleven hours a man will then earn more than in the same time at present;—perhaps, even more than he now does in twelve hours and a half. But he will no longer have the opportunity of compensating in one day for the time lost on another; so that, even at an advanced rate of wages, the sum of his earnings may be less: and, though this should not be so in the case of individuals, yet as the father is deprived of the profits of his children's industry, the gains of the whole family must be diminished. The rise in the rate of wages will, however, be only a temporary effect. The deficiency in the supply of labour, which shall have been artificially created by an act of the legislature, will in no long time be gradually filled up; the species of industry required in a cotton-factory will be purchased for the same price as at present; and wages will fall below what they now are in a ratio not less, perhaps greater, than that of the diminution in the number of working hours. These are the results of the measure, on the supposition that the demand for the commodity of the cotton-spinner undergoes no important variation. But, under every variation of demand, the proposed bill will make the rate of wages higher for a short time, and will afterwards render them permanently lower, than under the same circumstances they would otherwise be.

It is therefore clear, that the effect of the bill will be ultimately a material diminution of the labourers' earnings, and that, even immediately, the amount of the earnings of the whole family will be lessened. In all cases this is severe;

but how frightfully severe does it become in seasons of bad trade, when wages are low, and the operative can in part counterbalance the fall in the value, only by increasing the quantity of his labour? Now, how can all this be reconciled in any way with the professions of the bill, that it intends to improve and preserve the health of these people. If the legislature could diminish the poor man's wants in the same proportion as it diminishes the fund from which they are to be supplied, the bill, although equally objectionable in principle, would be less mischievous in practice. But it is intolerably hard, at a time when all the labour that the labouring classes can put forth is scarcely sufficient to procure the necessaries of life, to treat so large a portion of them as people who are diseased from luxury and inactivity, as enjoying a superfluity of comfort, part of which may be taken from them with great advantage to their health. Late years have been wonderfully prolific of ostentatious and useless schemes of philanthropy, from humble Evans and his nation of happy landholders, to Mr. Owen with the millennium dawning over the ruins of Christianity in a cotton-mill; not quite the spot, and not quite the circumstances, in which the beginnings of that blissful period were to be expected. Of all these schemes the present is one of the strangest. It is in truth a part of Mr. Owen's dreams: he was its father, though Sir R. Peel has graciously become its godfather, and taken upon himself the discharge of the parental duties. Such a descent might justify us in expecting a few extravagances in the child; but the reality has far exceeded our expectations; for it would be difficult to imagine a plan, in which the means are more oddly adapted to the ends. Here is a philanthropy, which professes to remedy the miseries of the poor by making them still poorer; and, while it pretends to watch over their health, proves the truth of its professions by dooming them to a greater share of the squalidness and privations of poverty. Surely the friends



of this bill do not reckon hunger, and cold, and want of cleanliness, the most efficacious preservatives of health, or a workhouse the most salubrious of all abodes? Yet cold, and hunger, and want of cleanliness, follow upon the enactment of this law; for they are the natural concomitants of increasing poverty. This regulation, therefore, has a direct and inevitable tendency to produce in general that kind of life among those to whom it extends, which both creates disease, and heightens its malignity, and propagates its infection.

These views of the baneful effects of the bill on the health of operatives, appear to be decisive against it. The principle itself, that shorter hours of labour will be attended by an improvement in health, is disproved by facts. At the Catrine works, the hours of labour have often been less than twelve; but at these times no alteration for the better was visible in the health of the work-people (p. 8). At the mills in Anderston, near Glasgow (p. 233), the operatives have frequently wrought not more than one-half, or one-third, of a regular day's work for weeks together; but not even an incipient improvement in the health or comfort of the people could be remarked. During the years 1811 and 1812, the factories in Manchester worked for a smaller number of hours than was their usual practice; but not even Mr. Gould (p. 109) could observe that the condition of the operatives was bettered by the change.

On the point of health, we have only to add, that the whole of the advantage to be gained by this gift of time must depend upon the manner in which that time is occupied. Whatever encourages vice, and particularly intoxication, which is at once the most common and most baneful of the bad habits of the labouring poor, is assuredly prejudicial to health. If, therefore, this vacant time, which is thrown upon their hands at the expense of their real comfort, should be devoted to immoral indulgences, another

blow is given to the pretensions of the bill, to the honour of improving health by shortening labour. We think it will not be difficult to make out that it will encourage vice. But the discussion of this topic belongs to the second general division of our inquiry; to which we now proceed.

**II. MORALS.**—Our remarks upon the second professed object of the bill will not require us to be so circumstantial, as it was thought necessary that those on the former topic should be. We have, to be sure, two questions of the same kind to consider: Is such a case made out as calls for parliamentary interference? and, if there be, Will the bill gain its end? but the first of those questions can be much more briefly answered than in the former case; because the evidence is much more uniform; there are neither so many explanations to be given, nor so many objections to be removed.

1. If the opponents of the bill have reason to congratulate themselves on the total failure of its friends to prove the necessity for it in regard to health, they are still more triumphant when they come to inquire, how far it has been made out to be necessary in regard to morals. As it is not enough for the supporters of the bill to prove, that there are certain circumstances connected with employment in a cotton-mill, the absence of which would be favourable to health, but they must make out the necessity of peculiar restrictions, by showing the existence of a peculiar insalubrity; so must they now prove, not that there is some, nor even a great deal of ignorance and immorality prevalent among those employed in cotton factories, but that moral evil and want of instruction have chosen these factories in so particular a manner for the place of their abode, that peculiar regulations to remove them are as necessary as their removal is in itself desirable. Among the lower classes in all manufactures much ignorance and vice is to be found; but since the bill exempts all others, it is prepared, of course, to

prove that, in comparison with cotton factories, all others are scenes of purity.

There is one observation, which must have struck every one, nearly, of itself, decisive of this part of the question. It is impossible that such a preponderance of vice as the bill, if it wish to be consistent or justifiable in any view, must suppose to have existed, should have existed among the population of cotton factories, without long ago becoming a public nuisance, and forcing itself upon public notice. In Manchester, for example, where upwards of 20,000 people are employed in cotton spinning, is it possible that so large a proportion of the population can have been so remarkably worse in point of immoral or criminal habits than other classes of labouring persons, without the character of the town and manufacture attracting attention, and the criminal calendar of the district proving its degradation? The vices of 20,000 people, not scattered in small portions through different parts of the country, but united in the same town, and employed in the same way, could not remain concealed. Yet we do believe, that this superiority of cotton spinning operatives in the arts of being criminal and immoral over all other kinds of labourers was not once suspected, till this bill assured the inhabitants of Lancashire, that their county is, out of all proportion, more wicked and ignorant than any other in the kingdom. This is what the supporters of the bill must be understood to assert. On the other hand, Mr. Richardson, a magistrate of Manchester, says (p. 128), "that it is as orderly and peaceable as any other populous town;" and Mr. Evans, another magistrate, states it to be "a remarkably orderly town" (p. 313). The factories therefore are free from all guilt of encouraging habits that would lead to public offences.

But, further, it is the most improbable of all things, that persons employed in cotton factories, whether children or adults, should be particularly addicted to vicious habits,

because their employment, more than any other, trains them to habits of industry and regularity; and even that very confinement, whose effects are so much mistaken, is a most useful preservative against those pernicious practices of which they would otherwise become the prey. Their employment is not one which allows them to spend their time in a lamentable alternation of excessive labour and riotous debauchery, working most industriously for one part of the week, and getting most industriously drunk for the remainder. It requires their unceasing attention; any habits, which would lead them to neglect it frequently, would soon compel them to leave it, for irregularity would terminate in dismission. To be regularly industrious is their plain and direct interest, for they must be so if they wish to continue in their employment. Immoral habits are always most prevalent among those classes of the manufacturing poor, the duration of whose labour depends solely on their own pleasure and dispositions; but operatives in cotton factories are surrounded by more circumstances, which shield them from the most common and fatal vices of the lower orders, than any other persons in the same rank.

It is not surprising, therefore, that all the evidence is quite decisive as to the non-existence of any particular mass of immorality in cotton-mills. Mr. Wood, a medical practitioner in Oldham, and who has had every opportunity of observing what he speaks about, says (p. 200), "that he does not think the moral character of children employed in cotton-mills is worse than that of others." Mr. Evans, whose opportunities of information are still more numerous and authentic, states (p. 313), "that with regard to morals, there has been nothing to call his attention to the state of those employed in cotton factories different from persons in similar situations." Mr. Buchanan (p. 10) gives, not an opinion, but a statement of fact, that children reared in cotton-mills, when they grow up, often go out apprentices to dif-

ferent employments; and that he has heard masters frequently say, that they preferred apprentices from the cotton-mills to those from the country, because they found the former superior in industrious habits. The following account (p. 85) of the cotton works at Tutbury, in Staffordshire, is attested to be true, by the vicar of the parish in which they are situated, and two of the justices of the county: "At one period, within the last thirty or forty years, Tutbury was notorious for intemperance, and the greatest excess of almost every common vice. Since the introduction of the cotton manufacture, it has by degrees overcome its former character of drunkenness and brutality; and the persons now employed by Messrs. Botts and Co. are equal, and, in most cases, greatly superior in point of conduct to those of the lower class in the parish engaged in farming and in other pursuits." Of the cotton works at Belper and Milford, in the county of Derby, Mr. Shutt says, upon oath (p. 217), "It is well known in this neighbourhood, that before the establishment of these works the inhabitants were notorious for vice and immorality: now their industry, decorous behaviour, attendance on public worship, and general good conduct, compared with the neighbouring villages, where no manufactures are established, is very conspicuous." Of the cotton works at Preston, it is certified by a person not interested in them (p. 305), "that testimony can be borne to the good conduct and morality of by far the greater part of the children." The head master and the visitor of a Sunday-school in Manchester, attended by 1850 children, certify (p. 371), "that the children who work in factories are more orderly in their conduct than those who do not;" and of another school of the same kind, the head master certifies (p. 372), "that the school he has been employed in for the last ten years consists chiefly of children employed in factories; and he can say from experience, that they are more regular in

attendance, more docile in behaviour, more tractable in disposition, and more attentive to improvement, than those who do not."

All this is evidence to which no objection can be taken. What, then, will the friends of the bill oppose to it? Will they say that, although the inmates of cotton-mills are industrious and temperate, and altogether much better behaved than the majority of persons engaged in other kinds of labour, yet many of them cannot read, and it is an intolerable grievance that bad scholars should have the privilege of spinning cotton threads? Then we call them to the proof of their assertion, setting aside all debate about its relevancy, though it were true. Of 5460 persons, between the ages of ten and eighteen, who attend forty-three cotton factories in Manchester, 4522 can read; and of 753 below ten, 529 can read (p. 374). Of 3989 between the ages of ten and eighteen, who work in forty-one mills in Scotland, 3619 can read (p. 241). Will the friends of the bill point out a higher rate of education in other labouring classes? It is useless to inveigh against these statements as partial and inaccurate; they agree with all the unexceptionable testimony; and the only way to overturn them is to produce something on the other side entitled to more credit;—something, for example, just the reverse of the certificate of the Curate of Bulwell, in Nottinghamshire, and of the acting magistrate of the county, who say of the cotton-mills in the parish (p. 221), "that the proficiency of the elder boys, in various branches of learning, was far beyond what could have been expected of children in their situation; of the younger ones, there were very few but could read well, and say the whole of the Church Catechism."

The only effort made to save the bill is by Mr. G. Gould, and, perhaps Mr. Nathaniel Gould, who kindly thrust themselves in to break its fall, by trying to prove that

children employed in cotton-mills, in Manchester, do not attend Sunday schools so numerous as these gentlemen think they ought to do. Although the fact were so, it would be of no importance; for we do not see why a labouring child is to be condemned as either wicked or ignorant, because he does not attend a Sunday school. Part of that day may, no doubt, be very usefully spent in one of these institutions; but the child may spend it just as profitably at home with his parents. The attempt, however, to make out the point has failed; it is not proved that factory children attend less numerous in proportion than others. Mr. Gould's method of inquiry was this: \* He supposes the number of children employed in mills in Manchester to be at least five times as great as the number of those in all other manufactories and workshops taken together; and, consequently, that for every one of the latter kind attending a Sunday school, there should be *five* from the factories. He next finds, that of 11,063 children attending certain of these schools, only 3817 belong to factories, and therefore he concludes that factories are hurtful to piety and morals. But then he lets out a secret which overturns the conclusion; for he says, "that there are few children in these schools that attend any factory or workshop, except those who attend cotton factories;" and consequently the remaining 8000 are, except "a few," children who have no employment at all. Now this just reverses Mr. Gould's inference; and, instead of proving that factory children disregard Sunday schools, proves distinctly that *they are the only children employed in labour* who do attend them. But Mr. Gould deals in facts, too; and whatever factory workers may care about Sunday schools, he is sure they care nothing at all about Sunday itself. "See them on a Sunday," exclaims Mr. G. Gould, "females as well as men often insult their well-behaved

\* P. 100, et seq.

superiors ; and discreet gentlemen, who meet them, will rather go to the other side of the street." This is alarming enough ; but Mr. Gould only intends it for a good-natured joke, to make people laugh with him, or at him, as they like best ; for he immediately tells us "*that he cannot distinguish factory people from other people on a Sunday ; that it is only supposition ; and that he does not think that the disorderly conduct of persons on a Sunday is any proof that it is the result of employment in the factories.*"

While such is the state of the evidence in the point of morals, it is most unbecoming in the friends of the bill to push on their extravagant measure, assuming from obstinacy a firmness of purpose which should be founded only on right, and consoling themselves for wanting the power of proving by reflecting on their peculiar capacities for asserting. They have forgotten that to prove is *their* duty, and appear to think it the same thing whether they prove themselves to be right, or their adversaries prove them to be wrong.

2. Supposing it were as true as it is erroneous that cotton factories are peculiarly favourable to vice and ignorance, are the provisions of the bill calculated to cherish morality, and extend instruction ? We have as little hesitation in giving a negative answer to this question as to the others.

In regard to education, the bill can only operate in the way of supplying *time* for instruction ; means and inclination must still be found by the young persons themselves, or by their parents. The average number of hours, during which they are employed at present, is twelve and a half ; that fixed by the bill is eleven ; the difference of one hour and a half is allowed for instruction. We are told, at the same time, that want of recreation is the great cause which injures their health, and deadens any desire for instruction. We say, then, that whatever may be desirable, the probable effect of this arrangement is, that the time intended for instruction will be given to recreation by the very young ; and by those who approach nearer the age at which they are eman-



cipated from the letter, though not from the spirit of the bill, it will be devoted to something much worse; if, in both cases, their parents do not rather make an effort to fill up their leisure hours by some laborious, but profitable employment. Fondness for attending school is no very general characteristic of children; and will not be the more so in this case, that, instead of recreation, it is only an exchange of one sort of confinement for another, and one which children do not consider as particularly amusing. Neither are means supplied for their daily education. Sabbath schools place instruction within the reach of immense numbers; but day and evening schools are in a very different situation, and it is to attendance on these last alone that the bill can afford any facility. Their instruction must be gratis; for it requires no argument to prove that parents, who are unable to educate their children in their present circumstances, will be still less able to do so when the operation of the bill has made them poorer. Nor will it be sufficient that the instruction be gratuitous. It is distinctly proved by the evidence taken before the Committee of the House of Commons, "On the Education of the lower Orders of the Metropolis," that great numbers of poor people do not send their children even to schools where instruction is not attended with expense, from an inability to furnish them with clean and decent clothing. This is particularly stated in the Minutes of Evidence of that Committee, pp. 5, 10, 11, 12, 15, and probably in many other passages which we have not had leisure to examine; and stated, too, even of the population of St. Giles. With all due respect for the worthy inhabitants of St. Giles, we certainly do think that they are, in general, neither more enlightened nor more virtuous members of the community than operatives in cotton-mills; and that this feeling of pride, or delicacy, or whatever it may be, is at least as strongly felt by the latter as by the former. The bill, therefore, by increasing the poverty of the operatives, increases the obstruction to edu-

cation, where it already exists in some degree, and produces it where it would otherwise be unknown. Besides, it is preposterous to expect, or even to wish, that young persons in that rank of life will be regular attendants on school till they arrive at sixteen. No such thing occurs in the rest of the manufacturing population; all the education they obtain is finished, and constant labour begun, at a much earlier period. From all these circumstances, we think that very few, if any, will employ the vacant time given them by the bill for purposes of instruction; and if they do not, it is nearly certain that it will be employed in a much worse way than spinning cotton.

In regard to morals, again, it will either be futile or prejudicial. It cannot tend to the prevention of crimes, for if their vacant time be spent in idleness, it will lead to crimes; and if in school, they will be no more beyond the reach of temptation than if it had been spent in the mill. More private immoralities are still further beyond its reach. These can be indulged in by the young persons only when going from, or when out of the factory: will they be less frequent when the time spent out of doors is increased; or, among those of them who may happen to attend school, what will render the time spent out of school less dangerous than what is now spent out of the factory? Attendance on school, joined to the hours of labour allowed by the bill, will make up about the same quantity of employment that they have at present; and if, in the one case, the patrons of the bill say it is followed by vice, how do they explain that it will be less so in the other? We are quite aware that the instruction they are receiving will be referred to as a preventative. They who place much confidence in this antidote, must have more faith in the quantity and efficacy of the knowledge which can be poured into a child, after the labour of the day is finished, than experience has hitherto justified. At any rate, the numbers who devote

their leisure to improvement will always be few ; and any barrier, which instruction might raise in their minds against the seductions of idleness and vice, will be swept away by the torrent of bad example, with which they will immediately be surrounded.

But, in the mean time, what becomes of the adults ? They are presented with as much leisure as the youngest child ; for their hours, too, are limited. Under the operation, then, of the bill, all the adults employed in the cotton manufacture are let loose from labour for a certain additional time, and that time will be chiefly in the evening. There is no employment to which they can betake themselves, and going to school is, with them, out of the question. The hours will not be allowed to lag on in a state of torpid and tiresome inactivity, for this is at no time the disposition of the working classes ; employment and profligacy are the only alternatives between which the bill has to choose. All experience proves, that in the lower orders, the deterioration of morals increases with the quantity of unemployed time of which they have the command. Thus the bill actually encourages vice ; it establishes idleness by act of parliament ; it creates and cherishes all those practices, which it pretends to discourage. Not satisfied with selecting, as the object of its portentous experiment, a manufacture which, according to the evidence, requires interference in point of morals, much less than many others to which the measure does not extend, its very first effect is to place the persons employed in it in that situation which is the fruitful parent of so many vices. Nor is this view at all contradicted by our former argument, that the bill will, at the same time, diminish the means of being dissolute : it will only encourage extravagance and debauchery in expending the remainder. Every person knows, that even in times of distress, the working classes find too much to squander

upon injurious practices : the general comfort of the family is diminished, much more than the improper indulgences of the individual. Besides, even although their diminished earnings should lessen their ability to be profligate, the force of the temptation to which idleness exposes them will not be diminished. The only difference will be, that they will be urged to other means to supply the wants of vice, and positive crime will increase, as well as more private immoralities. If the question were asked, what man is in the greatest risk of becoming vicious and criminal? no person would hesitate to answer, a man, who is poor and idle. This is precisely the kind of men, into which the bill will convert all adults employed in the cotton manufacture. They are already sufficiently sunk in poverty; the bill will make them poorer, by diminishing their earnings; and it will make them idle, by lessening the period of their daily labour. Yet this is a bill to preserve health and morals !

To remove this mighty and insuperable objection, it has been said, that the profligacy of the lower orders arises in reality from the excessive length and severity of their labour, which drives them to immoral practices to recruit their exhausted strength, and relieve the tedium of their mode of life. Our short answer to this is, that the opponents of the bill have nothing to do with it; they do not allow that their work-people are so distinguished for immoral practices; they deny that their operatives have recourse to these practices to recruit their exhausted strength; and, for the truth of this denial, they appeal again to the evidence. He must be little acquainted with the state of the labouring poor, who does not know that the most vicious are, not those whose labour is long and constant, but those whose industry can be intermitted whenever they wish to be idle.

Thus the bill necessarily tends to produce immorality and crime among the adult operatives. But it will not stop here. When it thus deteriorates the moral condition of the adults, it sets itself in direct opposition to its own professed object, for it attacks likewise the health and morals of the children. What will be the effect on the minds of the young, of witnessing the constant repetition of disorderly conduct by their own parents, or their grown up companions? The scene cannot be removed from their view, and there are no means to prevent contamination. Are children so expert reasoners as to find out, that a measure can have been intended to improve their character which has degraded that of their parents? Will the instructions of a schoolmaster (if to school they should go) repel, or counteract, the contagion of example? Will the precepts of morality or religion be effectually impressed on minds, which are exposed to the influence of a perpetual round of dissoluteness among those who have authority over them by nature or by age? It is vain for the bill to boast of the improvement it will effect by allowing time for education to the young, while it produces around them a profligacy always dangerous to youth, and, in the present instance, doubly dangerous, from the connexion between those who exhibit it and those who are exposed to its infection.

Again, it is the interest of the proprietor to derive the greatest possible profit from his sunk capital. A limitation of the hours of labour diminishes this profit, and it becomes his interest to escape from the restriction. The bill extends only to persons under sixteen years of age; by dismissing all these, therefore, he throws off its trammels. Accordingly, one of the gentlemen examined says (p. 169), "If we were by any law to be restrained from working our hands to the best advantage, we should dismiss all those

from our work that would bring us under such a regulation." The interest of all the spinners clearly lies the same way. Who can entertain any doubt of the effect of the whole, or any considerable portion of these persons, being dismissed from their employment? Their own morals would not suffer more than the general peace of the country. Before they reached the age at which the law allowed them to be industrious, they would have made such a proficiency in vice, as would both indispose and disqualify them for regular employment.

Another way in which it directly attacks the morals of those whose character it particularly professes to improve, is, that it sets the child against the parent, by telling the former that his bodily and mental welfare have been saved from the grasp of his parent's avarice only by the strong hand of an act of parliament. It furnishes the child with leisure, but takes care to tell him, that this indulgence has been given against the will of his father, whose unnatural conduct would have doomed his infant years to premature and excessive labour, if he had not been checked by a higher power. On the other hand, it teaches the parent to look upon the child as one who is only a burden, when he might have been an aid. Only those who are conversant with the poor know how much the cordiality of the family is increased and preserved by the feeling, that all its members contribute to supply its wants. It betrays ignorance to say, that the poor regard their children only as machines from which profit may be made. No poor man can be justly required to omit any proper opportunity of being a gainer by his children's labour; but this, instead of expelling, increases the power of natural affection, by adding the conviction of utility to the feeling of parental love. Few things of the kind can be more improper, or have a worse effect on the harmony of the families of the poor,

than to proclaim, as this bill virtually does, that in the labouring classes affection is too weak, and dissoluteness too strong, to justify parliament in entrusting an operative cotton spinner with that control over his own child which it denies to no other parent.

Let us here detect a fallacy. The bill, it has been said, will improve morals, because, when parents are deprived altogether of the earnings of very young children, and partly of those who are more able to labour, they will work more industriously to increase their own, and will dispose of them with greater economy. In the first place, the assumed fact here has no existence: it is quite impossible that parents employed in cotton factories can compel their children to work, in the hope of being comparatively idle and dissolute themselves; for unless their industry is regular, they are immediately discharged. But, secondly, although it were true that these parents would wish to fill up, by increasing their own labour, the gap which the bill has made in the earnings of the family, the bill, at the very moment when it counts upon these wishes to assist it in improving morals, enacts that these wishes shall be ineffectual; for, instead of allowing the parents employed in factories to labour *more*, it ordains them to labour *less* than they do at present. As to its pretended influence in inducing them to practise economy, it is enough to say, that no effect can be more opposite to the necessary influence of a measure which encourages idleness.

We have not yet explored all the channels, through which this bill will pour immortality into the population of cotton factories. It encourages fraud; for it sets limits to their power in employing their children, which they will be eager to transgress, because it will be their interest to do so; for if any one point is more indubitably ascertained by the evidence than another, it is, that parents have a most anxious desire to have their young children

received into mills, and that it is only to gratify them that children below the minimum age of the bill are admitted. Those, again, who are more advanced, will find it their interest to represent themselves as above sixteen, to ensure their admission or prevent their discharge. Here are the sources of manifold frauds, which, in the greater number of instances, the employer can have no means of detecting: and to teach people to contrive means fraudulently to evade one law, is the first lesson towards making them disregard all laws.

Lastly, the bill will injure the moral character of the operatives, by encouraging insubordination among them, and weakening the connexion between them and their employer. Whoever is at all acquainted with the manufacture knows that the work-people are never remarkable for a very tranquil and submissive spirit towards their masters, and that their unwillingness to allow any diminution in the rate of wages has been the occasion of many public disturbances. Now we do not see how any man can doubt, that this mutinous spirit will be carried much further, when the operatives take up the opinion that parliament is on their side, in their opposition to their employers. They cannot avoid taking up this opinion when they see this bill bewailing their calamities, as men whose rights and comforts are sacrificed to their masters' avarice. Much less, indeed, would be sufficient to infuse this idea into the minds of men who, like all in the same rank, are more accustomed to feel than to think. While the fact, that a diminution in the earnings of each family will follow the bill increases all these dangers, it leads the operatives into a very mischievous, but very natural delusion. They know that this bill has been proposed, and, if carried through, that the law will have been enacted, with the professed intention of bettering their condition. They



will not easily conceive, nor, indeed, would more impartial persons, that a diminution of their wages is the instrument by which this intention is to be effected; but they will find that this diminution follows what parliament has done, and they will ascribe it to the tyranny of their masters, or a plan to frustrate the avowed and humane intentions of the legislature. An increase of their spirit of insubordination is the necessary result. The bill teaches them to look upon themselves as injured men, and their employers as avaricious oppressors; to regard their period of labour as a sacrifice of all they should value extorted from them by a selfish and unfeeling master, who exercises over them a more tyrannical control than any to which their equals in other trades are subjected. The inevitable consequence of all this is, that they will become more discontented, and repining, and mutinous.

They will say, that parliament has acknowledged their right to call upon it to prescribe the terms on which they are to labour; and that the failure of its first effort in their behalf only gives them a stronger claim to further and more effectual assistance. The legislature imagined, that it would be better for them to work eleven hours than twelve and a half: to confer this supposed boon upon them, it disregarded the injustice of diminishing the value of the sunk capital of the spinner, and the impolicy of increasing the cost at which his commodity is produced. The intended blessing turns out to be a curse, even to those for whose benefit it was meant. The workmen will infer that the legislature has failed only by not having recourse to means sufficiently effectual, and will call loudly for further interposition. If a maximum of the time of labour may be fixed, why not establish a minimum of wages? for too much work is at least not more prejudicial to the health than too little food. There is no principle on which the

one regulation may be defended, which will not serve equally to prove the other necessary and wise. If, therefore, the bill should pass into a law, the manufacturing countries will thenceforward be less or more in a state of constant agitation; for the workmen will never cease uniting and consulting to obtain such regulations as they imagine will be for their benefit, and parliament will never assemble without being harassed by their demands. These demands will of course be refused: disaffection will be the inevitable result. The influence of the master, never great enough to preserve complete subordination, will ere this have been in a great measure annihilated; and his authority will have been superseded by agitators of active characters and dangerous designs, who find gratification both to their vanity and to their interest in leading workmen into associations aimed against their superiors in wealth or rank. So far is this from being a picture of imaginary evils, that it is an exact representation of what is already going on to a certain degree. In many districts the minds of the workmen, buoyed up with vague hopes of they know not what approaching improvement in their circumstances, have been thrown by the proposed measure into a state of violent fermentation: and that fermentation, as it was at first excited, so it is still kept up by the artifices and misrepresentations of the inferior agents engaged in supporting the present bill, many of whom are the very men who a few months back placed themselves at the head of those combinations, which were intended for the subversion of the state.

Such we hold to be the effects of this bill, on the morals of those employed in cotton spinning, and every one of them is at variance with its professed object.

III. We have now considered the bill in relation to the two objects which it professes to have in view. We have endeavoured to show, that not only does it fail to make out

the supposed necessity on which it is founded, but that all the allegations of its friends regarding that necessity are most unanswerably disproved; and that even although the case had turned out to be favourable to its pretensions, its provisions, instead of curing, have a direct and unavoidable tendency to aggravate all the evils of which it complains. What more can be said against a proposed enactment, than that it is unnecessary, and will do harm? There still remain, however, one or two objections, not connected with either of its professed objects, but carrying a great deal of weight in showing its impolicy.

1. One which occurs on the slightest consideration of the nature of the bill, is the dangerous and alarming principle on which it is founded: it is radically inconsistent with the state of society, and the prosperity of a manufacturing and commercial country, and seems to be at variance, in no small degree, with the spirit of our constitution. Hitherto every labourer had the satisfaction of knowing, not only that the enjoyment of the fruits of his industry was secured to him, but that he was at liberty, likewise, to exercise that industry in any way he found or thought most advantageous to himself, if not directed to what was unlawful. The scene is now to be changed: restrictions and regulations which improved ideas in political economy, and the lessons of experience, had almost banished from the mercantile, are about to be introduced into the manufacturing system, and transferred from the interchange of commodities to the disposal of labour. It is true that the present bill extends to only one manufacture; but that is a staple one; and who can tell where the spirit of law-making will cease, when the principle has once been introduced, and solemnly recognized by parliament? Can that spirit, if it wishes to be consistent, refrain from laying its grasp upon other branches of manufacture, when it has begun with one, which is proved to stand in need of super-

intendence much less than many others which the bill passes over with a temporary lenity? Those who have escaped in the present instance will do well to consider, whether they do not owe their safety to the fears of the friends of the bill. These gentlemen understand the maxim "Divide and conquer;" they have selected one manufacture, because they did not wish to array against themselves the powerful phalanx of all the manufacturers in the country. But the others will have their turn. It will be an easy task to prove that flax-spinners, and wool-spinners, and hand-weavers, and many other classes of the lower orders, are as unhealthy and immoral as those who are employed in cotton factories. How will parliament be able to refuse applications for the regulation of all these, when it will previously have done the same thing, on far slighter grounds, with the cotton spinners?

2. It will assuredly be prejudicial to the manufacture. One, and by no means the least important way in which it will exercise this baneful influence, consists in rendering almost unproductive, if not altogether throwing out of the trade, those mills which are built on streams. In these the moving power is necessarily irregular; and where there happen to be more mills than one on the same stream, the disadvantages of this irregularity are very much increased. To tie down the work-people in factories to a certain part of the day, within which their labour must be performed, is of less importance in mills where the moving power is steam, which can be applied at any time that the hours of working may require. But where the moving power is water, and not capable of being so managed, the case is altogether different. *There*, instead of the power being made to suit the hours, the hours must be made to suit the supply of power; it must be used when it comes; if it intermits, it must be waited on, and the time and wages lost in the morning or forenoon must be compensated by longer

labour in the evening, although in this way the whole quantity of labour may not be equal to the daily rate which even the bill allows. Under the operation of the bill this cannot be done; it fixes two periods of the day, within which all work must be completed; and if the water does not obey the act of parliament, the operatives must pay the penalty. When nine o'clock in the evening arrives, the work-people may not have been employed for half a dozen hours, and may be in effect dependant for to-morrow's meal on the use they make of the present opportunity. But the bill says, "you shall not work one moment longer; go home to cold and hunger; and if, as is extremely probable, the water should have failed again by to-morrow morning, take amusement instead of food, which will preserve your health, and steal instead of working, which will improve your morals." The consequence is, that the operatives must probably seek a livelihood in some more free and productive trade, and so much capital be withdrawn from the manufacture.

But these and all other factories will be grievously affected in another way. The bill bids fair to exclude them from every foreign market. At a time like the present, when the continental nations are exerting themselves to push forward their own manufactures, and exclude ours by an overwhelming competition; when, too, they are aided by advantages which we do not enjoy, cheaper labour, lighter taxation, and in some a facility of obtaining the raw material at a lower rate; at such a time, it is more than strange that a measure should be seriously proposed to parliament, which will accomplish the wishes of our rivals more speedily and effectually, than all they have hitherto been able to do themselves. Yet such is the tendency of the bill. A restriction in this country upon the hours of labour is just a bounty given to the rival manufacturer who is under none, and there are none on the Continent; it will make the article

dearer to the manufacturer here, in proportion to the smaller quantity produced from the same sunk capital; and if he resolve upon escaping the restriction by employing none below sixteen, the price of labour will rise upon him by employing adults. In the words of Mr. Lee, one of the most experienced and intelligent spinners in the kingdom, and examined by the Committee, "restrictive regulations will give foreign countries in which there are no restrictions an advantage over our own, probably produce an emigration of workmen to them, and a transfer of capital." Even if the effect were doubtful, the stake is of too immense value to be even risked; a manufacture of such vast importance both to the financial interest of the country, and to the employment of our population, is the very last that should be made the subject of a dangerous experiment.

The time has been, when Sir R. Peel himself would have joined with us in all we have now said. When he introduced the Apprentice Bill into parliament, in 1802, he was urged by different gentlemen to give it a much more extensive application, to let it operate through every cottage in the country: and the intentions of these gentlemen, he further explains to have been to comprehend "*free labour, not only in factories, but to apply it to apprentices in other places.*" (P. 140.) He says, likewise, that had he yielded to the urgent solicitations of these gentlemen, "*the manufacturers of this country would not have been in the flourishing state they now are.*" If any interference to limit the hours of free labour would have been injurious then, it cannot be less detrimental now; for the present certainly is none of those seasons in which a degree of injury may be inflicted without any real loss being ultimately sustained. The reason which Sir R. gives for proposing now what he successfully and most properly resisted then, does not alter the case. It is, that "a revolution" has taken place in the factories, that the practice of employing

apprentices has gone into disuse, their place is filled by children who are free labourers, and thus the benefits of the Apprentices Bill are about to be entirely lost. Although the fact were so, it would not in the least alter the pernicious tendency of the present measure. The "revolution" itself, however, does not appear to have taken place to the extent which is supposed. It appears, from the evidence of Mr. Lee (p. 341), that before the enacting of the Apprentices Bill, there were in Manchester fifty-two factories worked by *free labour*, by children, as at present; and that, at present, there are sixty-four factories altogether. But, whatever has been the extent of the change, it is matter of congratulation rather than regret. We can see no cause to lament that cotton mills, instead of employing the unprotected, degraded, and hardly-used inmates of a workhouse, now employ children who are secure from insult and oppression, by having the power of leaving an inhuman master, and being constantly under the control and protection of their own parents. And is it for what is erroneously conceived to be the preservation, but will in reality be the misfortune of these children, that the prosperity of so important a manufacture is to be endangered!

3. The poor rates, a burden which the wisdom of parliament is now endeavouring to alleviate, will be increased by the bill. It appears from the whole course of the evidence, that fewer operatives in cotton-mills in general apply for parochial relief, than any other class of the labouring or manufacturing poor. Thus the amount of parochial assistance paid to nearly *a thousand persons* employed in one factory, is stated on oath, by an overseer, to have been only 5*l.* in twelve months (p. 342); and the spinners of Manchester are now in possession of a document, verified upon oath by the overseer, which proves that operatives in cotton-mills come upon the parish for assistance, in proportion to those otherwise em-

